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ABSTRACT

Classroom management and effective discipline are skills that all beginning teachers must learn. Classroom management refers to those procedures or routines a teacher uses to maintain a smoothly running classroom; discipline refers to those techniques or strategies a teacher uses to respond to specific acts of student misbehavior. This booklet, intended primarily for student teachers and beginning teachers, provides practical strategies for both classroom management and discipline that are solidly based in theory. The publication is divided into three parts. "Prevention Strategies: A Discipline Plan" discusses classroom routines and behavior rules, and the arrangement of both seating and instructional materials. "Four Discipline Models" describes and analyzes the assertive discipline model, a traditional model, the effective momentum management model, and the reality therapy model. "Discipline Scenarios" presents and analyzes both effective and ineffective approaches to developing behavior rules and routines, focusing on preventive strategies and the discipline models. The document concludes with a synthesis of discipline strategies that teachers can use to help maintain an orderly classroom environment. (Contains seven references.) (LL)

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Discipline Strategies for Teachers

Eleanor B. Baron

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ELEANOR B. BARON

Eleanor B. Baron is an assistant professor in the School of Education at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses. She also conducts a summer workshop at Duquesne on "Discipline in the Classroom and Behavior Management" as well as inservice sessions for local school districts.

Baron has been a classroom teacher, assistant principal, and assistant superintendent. She received her undergraduate degree from California University of Pennsylvania and her master's and Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to her career in education, she was a professional skater with the "Ice Capades."

Her experiences in the public schools and work with student teachers have contributed to the ideas presented in this fastback.

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Discipline Strategies for Teachers

by
Eleanor B. Baron

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Introduction

Successful teaching requires a degree of classroom order and control before effective instruction can take place. Achieving order and control are skills that all beginning teachers must learn. They are the skills of classroom management and effective discipline.

The terms classroom management and classroom discipline, while related, are not synonymous. Classroom management refers to all those procedures or routines a teacher uses to maintain a smoothly running classroom. Discipline refers to those techniques or strategies a teacher uses to respond to specific acts of student misbehavior. Because classroom management is so intertwined with discipline, both will be addressed in this fastback.

Classroom discipline is a major concern for both teachers and parents. The Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa Polls of Public Attitudes Toward the Public Schools conducted over the past 20 years have identified discipline as the first or second most serious problem facing the schools (Elam 1989). Clearly, the lack of discipline is perceived by the general public to be a serious problem. In addition, one of the six National Education Goals proposed by President Bush and the nation's governors recognizes the problem. It reads: "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning."

All teachers have classroom discipline problems at some time during their professional careers. In fact, many consider this to be their

number-one problem. Discipline problems lead to teacher stress and burnout, with many leaving the profession because of their inability to cope. Although it helps, experience alone is not enough to cope with discipline problems. Some teachers with years of service are still unable to cope.

This fastback is intended primarily for student teachers and beginning teachers, but it may prove useful for some experienced teachers as well. It provides practical strategies for both classroom management and discipline that have a solid basis in theory. The theory is illustrated in scenarios using both positive and negative examples. With practice, patience, and especially caring, these strategies should help any teacher develop a disciplined classroom environment in which learning will flourish.

Prevention Strategies: A Discipline Plan

The causes of discipline problems are numerous and complex. They range from a student's need for attention to boredom, emotional instability, restlessness, and open defiance. Students seeking attention may act out by being the class clown or by being constantly argumentative. Students with emotional problems may act out by bullying classmates or other defiant acts. The restless student who finds it impossible to sit still for extended periods may pester other students. And for some students, school simply is not very interesting; they find it boring and resent being forced to attend.

Some of the blame for student misbehavior can be placed on the school, the teacher, or the parents. Classrooms may be overcrowded and the environment unfriendly or even hostile. The curriculum may be irrelevant and assignments uninteresting. Teachers may be nagging and lacking a sense of humor. And parents may lack interest in their child's education, or problems in the home may carry over to the classroom. All of the above are some of the contributing factors to student misbehavior.

By being aware of the various causes of student misbehavior, teachers can begin to develop a comprehensive discipline plan with a focus on prevention. Such a plan is discussed below.

The first step in achieving effective classroom management and discipline is planning and writing down a classroom discipline plan that incorporates routines for classroom operation and rules for classroom

behavior. The plan will vary for individual teachers because they differ in their teaching styles and in their need for structure and order. Some teachers prefer a more structured environment in which they are in control; others prefer a more relaxed environment with students engaged in a lot of activities.

Classroom Routines and Behavior Rules

Classroom routines and rules for acceptable behavior are necessary components of a discipline plan, because students must know what is expected of them. Considerable thought should be given to what routines and rules need to be codified in a discipline plan. The list need not be long. It should be limited to only those items that help to promote a positive learning environment.

Some teachers like to present a list of expected behaviors to students the first day of school. Having the rules printed as a handout immediately conveys to students that the teacher regards them as important. Typically, the teacher goes over the rules, explains their rationale, and gets input from students as to their appropriateness and fairness. Often the set of rules is made into an attractive poster, which serves as a visual reminder to students as to what is expected of them.

Other teachers prefer to use the first few days of school to develop classroom rules collaboratively with students. By letting students help to formulate the rules, they better understand the need for them and come to accept them as their own. Many teachers also send the list of rules home so parents will know what is expected of students. When parents are informed, they are more likely to support and reinforce the teacher's goal for an orderly learning environment.

Some clear and simple rules and routines that might be part of a classroom discipline plan are:

1. Students are to be seated and quiet after the bell rings.
2. Students are to raise their hand to be recognized. No shouting out.

3. Students are to have their books and materials ready for class.
4. Fighting and arguing are forbidden.
5. Students must respect the opinions of others.

Once classroom rules and routines have been set, they must be enforced consistently and fairly. The discipline plan also should have clearly stated consequences for infractions of rules. Some teachers use a point system to deal with rules infractions, with more serious infractions receiving more points. As students accumulate points, they are denied certain privileges. For example, an accumulation of three points in a day means no recess; five points means detention. Students need to know when and how many points are given for infractions. For example, if students shout out answers without raising their hand to be recognized, they receive one point. If students fight in class or on the playground, they receive three points.

Arrangement of Seating and Instructional Materials

Another basic, but often overlooked, consideration in a discipline plan is the arrangement of seating and materials in the classroom. Many potential discipline problems can be thwarted with proper seating and materials arrangements. Such considerations include the placement of the teacher's desk, the arrangement of students' desks, and the traffic flow in the classroom. When visualizing a classroom arrangement that deters potential discipline problems, a teacher should consider the following:

1. Is the teacher able to see all the students during full class instruction as well as when they are in learning centers or work areas?
2. Can all students see the chalkboard and visuals?
3. Are materials (paper, pencil sharpener, and supplemental books) placed out of traffic-flow areas in order to minimize disruption?
4. Should student desks be arranged in rows or arranged in groupings for cooperative learning activities?

5. Should students be assigned seats alphabetically or should they be allowed to sit where they wish?

While teaching philosophy and physical limitations of the classroom will dictate to some extent how seating arrangements are made, many potential discipline problems can be averted by giving careful attention to seating and materials arrangements.

Even with the best of discipline plans, teachers still will be tested by students pushing the limits of acceptable behavior. Knowing that this will happen, teachers should mentally rehearse how they will respond to such situations. Such rehearsal gives teachers confidence in handling problems when they arise and avoids spontaneous emotional reactions, with the teacher possibly losing control or losing face.

The whole purpose of having a discipline plan is prevention. And remember, prevention is better than intervention. By knowing what is expected of them and why certain rules are necessary, students will help to contribute to an orderly classroom environment. And by working in an orderly environment, they will eventually develop self-discipline and individual responsibility.

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Four Discipline Models

Several different models or approaches to classroom discipline are reported in the literature. They vary in their degree of structure or control by the teacher, with some more teacher-centered and others more student-centered. In this chapter four well-known models are briefly described and analyzed. Each has merit in that the skills needed to use the model can be learned in a relatively short time. Also, each has been tested in practice and has proved successful.

The Assertive Discipline Model

The Assertive Discipline model was developed by Lee and Marlene Canter (1976), based on their work in assertiveness training. The Canters observed techniques used by effective teachers to handle student behavior and concluded that these teachers were assertive; that is, they expressed their expectations to students and were prepared to back up their words with action.

The model stresses a teacher's right to an orderly classroom environment. The teacher is in charge of the class, and no student has the right to disrupt or monopolize it. The model stresses positive reinforcement for good behavior as well as consequences for misbehavior. Highly structured and teacher-centered, the model trains teachers to react to problems with assertive behavior rather than angry responses.

The Assertive Discipline model advocates a three-step process for promoting positive student behavior. First, the teacher identifies

specific rules or expectations that students are expected to follow or meet. The teacher talks through the rules or expectations with the students to ensure that they understand them. Second, after identifying the specific rules or expectations, the teacher uses positive repetition to reinforce them with students. The focus is on reinforcing positive behavior rather than on students who misbehave. Third, if some students persist in misbehaving by violating the rules, only then should the teacher use punishment. And the punishment or consequences for misbehavior should never be psychologically or physically harmful to the student.

The Canters suggest a five-step plan for rules infractions but caution that a teacher first must be comfortable using the model. The steps are:

First Infraction: Student is warned.
Second Infraction: Student is given a 10-minute time out (isolation).
Third Infraction: Student is given a 15-minute time out (isolation).
Fourth Infraction: Student's parents are called.
Fifth Infraction: Student is sent to the principal's office.

The Assertive Discipline model is popular with teachers because it gives them a structured approach to developing desired behavior in the classroom. Teachers can adapt the model to their own teaching style. One recommended strategy is that a teacher not reprimand a student for misbehaving until two other students have been reinforced with positive statements for desired behavior. For example, a teacher may say to students who are demonstrating desired behavior while another student is misbehaving: "Dave, you're working quietly and you're doing a great job," or "My, Jean and Tim are working well together." This strategy attempts to model positive behavior for the student who is misbehaving. Positive reinforcement can be given with verbal praise, rewards, special privileges, games, prizes, being excused from homework, or library privileges.

A Traditional Model

In *A Place Called School* (1984) John Goodlad and his associates reported the results of their massive study of schooling in America. Among the many types of data collected from interviews with teachers and principals, as well as from direct classroom observations, were the various types of discipline problems teachers experience and the prevention strategies and intervention techniques they use. These data, collected in the 1970s, reflect a traditional teacher-centered approach to discipline, which is still widely used today.

Teachers' perceptions of general student misbehavior included restlessness, giggling, disruptions, and stubbornness. Discipline strategies employed included positive reinforcement using praise and token rewards, such as juice or candy. Also, students who behaved had their names placed on an honor list and were given special privileges. The most frequently used strategies for controlling misbehavior included:

1. Avoiding or ignoring minor misbehavior.
2. A glance or staring at the offender to communicate the teacher's annoyance.
3. Reminders to students of appropriate behavior when misbehavior occurs.
4. Commands and directives when students are out of order.
5. Verbal threats.
6. Separating a student from the site of the misbehavior.

When ignoring misbehavior or staring at the offender fail to work, teachers typically moved toward the student without saying anything but sometimes put their hand lightly on the offender's shoulder or head to indicate that the misbehavior should stop. Punishment used included changing a student's seat or removing the student from the group. Sometimes students were made to put their heads down on their desk or to sit in a corner. If misbehavior persisted, students were sent to the principal's office or parents were called. School suspension and paddling also were used.

The traditional approaches to discipline reported by Goodlad included both positive reinforcement and intervention strategies. When positive reinforcement did not work, then interventions including punishment came into play. Many of the problems reported by teachers were in handling and controlling an entire class. (Would these problems diminish if students were actively engaged in cooperative learning projects?)

While many educators today would strongly object to paddling as a discipline technique, many of the traditional approaches described by Goodlad would be helpful for both beginning and experienced teachers. For example, the simple act of a teacher moving toward an offending student often seems to solve the problem.

The Effective Momentum Management Model

This teacher-centered model is associated with the work of Jacob Kounin (1970). His research involved videotaping teachers in the classroom and analyzing their behaviors. He found that certain teacher behaviors resulted in higher student achievement and a lower incidence of discipline problems. He also found that the most effective teachers were those who used prevention strategies rather than intervention strategies.

Kounin describes the teacher behaviors associated with good discipline with the terms: "withitness," "overlapping," "momentum," and "smoothness." Each of these behaviors is defined below.

Withitness refers to the teacher's skill in being aware of all that is going on in the classroom no matter how many activities are taking place; for example, working with individual students while also monitoring the rest of the class. Additionally, it refers to the teacher's ability to correct misbehavior before it escalates, to nip it in the bud, so to speak. The teacher has to be "with it" in order to know when to reprimand and when not to.

Overlapping refers to a teacher's skill in handling two or more matters at the same time, such as dealing with a misbehaving student while simultaneously maintaining the flow of the lesson.

Momentum refers to a teacher's skill in pacing instruction in order to cover the lesson's objectives without digressions or distractions by students.

Smoothness refers to a teacher's skill in moving from one activity to another without being distracted by irrelevant matters. An example of smoothness might be a teacher who presents a science lesson involving an initial lecture to the whole class followed by the class breaking up into teams to conduct group experiments, and all this is happening without wasting a lot of time for the student teams to get organized to conduct their experiments. A smooth-flowing lesson keeps a class interested in the material and lessens the chances for students to get off task and into mischief.

Kounin's model is popular with teachers and teacher educators because he identifies specific behaviors teachers can learn that help to prevent discipline problems from happening or escalating. For example, a teacher demonstrating withitness knows when to ignore minor incidents and when not to reprimand. This skill is important because it keeps the teacher from constantly having to nag while trying to conduct the lesson. Withitness, of course, requires that teachers know their students and behaviors. Kounin also suggests using the stare or body language to signal inappropriate behavior.

Overlapping is a more difficult skill to learn and is mastered only with experience and practice. Handling two or three tasks simultaneously, such as monitoring students doing assigned seatwork, working with others on a group activity, and supervising still others working at a learning center or doing remedial work, is not easy. But Kounin's research has shown it can be done successfully with practice.

The skills of momentum and smoothness also are best mastered through experience. These skills involve pacing instruction so that it is not too hurried or too slow; it should challenge students but not leave some behind. Smoothness requires staying on task and not getting sidetracked by students' irrelevant comments or questions. Such

distractions can be frustrating but should be either ignored or handled by saying curtly, "I'll come back to your question later."

All the teacher behaviors identified by Kounin are preventive strategies. Teachers exhibiting these behaviors have fewer discipline problems, because they control the classroom in ways that do not allow problems to occur in the first place.

The Reality Therapy Model

This model, developed by William Glasser, reflects his belief that people escape reality by behaving inappropriately and irresponsibly. This model is student-centered and assumes that a teacher's duty is to help the student make good choices, which in turn result in good behavior. The model's first focus is on providing a classroom environment and curriculum that meet students' basic needs for belonging, power, fun, and freedom. The second focus is on helping students make good behavioral choices. If a student chooses bad behavior and that behavior produces a desirable result, the bad behavior will reoccur.

Glasser bases his model on seven key assumptions:

1. Students can control their behavior. They choose to act the way they do.
2. Good choices produce good behavior and bad choices produce bad behavior.
3. Teachers must always try to help students make good choices.
4. Teachers who truly care about their students accept no excuses for bad behavior.
5. Reasonable consequences should always follow student misbehavior.
6. Class rules are essential, and they must be enforced.
7. Classroom meetings are effective ways for attending to matters of classroom rules, behavior, and discipline.

Glasser also suggests the following strategies to achieve positive discipline:

1. The teacher should stress personal responsibility and reinforce the idea that students are in school to study and learn.
2. The teacher should establish rules and review classroom procedures.
3. The teacher should accept no excuses for inappropriate behavior.
4. The teacher should have students make value judgments about their misbehavior and suggest suitable alternatives.
5. The teacher should make students aware of the consequences for their misbehavior and be consistent in enforcing these consequences.

Reality Therapy, as its name implies, prepares students for the real world in which students are responsible for their actions and are punished for inappropriate behavior. The model requires a lot of student and teacher interaction. It starts with the premise that if students are treated with respect and dignity and are involved in the problem-solving process, they will become more responsible. Rather than manipulating the student by offering rewards for improved behavior, the teacher frames questions in a way that involves the student in examining the misbehavior and developing a plan for change, sometimes in the form of a behavior contract.

If misbehavior persists, Glasser suggests isolating students from class activities until they are ready to change their behavior. If that does not solve the problem, students are sent to the principal's office for further consultation and appropriate punishment.

The four discipline models described above, as well as the classroom management procedures presented earlier, provide teachers with several principles for developing a comprehensive discipline plan. The next chapter presents a set of four classroom scenarios – both positive and negative – to illustrate how these principles work in action.

Discipline Scenarios

The first two scenarios in this chapter depict both effective and ineffective approaches to developing behavior rules and routines, with the focus on preventive strategies. The second set of scenarios depict both effective and ineffective discipline strategies, with the focus on the four discipline models described in the previous chapter. Each scenario is followed by an analysis pointing out the differences and why one was effective and the other was not.

Ms. Hill's Class

Ms. Hill teaches seventh-grade English, and this is the first day of school. She has received her class roster from the office and decides to seat her students alphabetically. She also has prepared in advance a list of classroom rules on a transparency for use with the overhead projector.

The list of rules contains only five items, and each is clearly stated. They are:

1. When you arrive for class, please be quiet and take your seat.
2. Class will begin promptly after the bell rings, so don't dilly dally.
3. Don't be tardy, or you will be disciplined according to the school policy rules.

4. If you have been absent, you must see the teacher after class.
5. Homework must be handed in on time.

As the students enter class the first day of school, they stand around chatting about their summer activities. By the time the bell rings, most are in their seats; but a few continue to stand and talk. Ms. Hill stares at them and gestures with her hand to indicate they are to sit down.

Ms. Hill smiles as she greets her new students and then takes out her seating chart. She tells the class she is going to assign seats in alphabetical order because it will help her to learn their names quickly, and that's important to her. There is some hubbub while the students move around the classroom to take their newly assigned seats, as well as some muttering from a few who find they are not sitting next to a friend. Ms. Hill ignores this. After the seating arrangements are completed, Ms. Hill turns off the lights and switches on the overhead to project the transparency she has prepared in advance. By this time, the students have quieted down, anticipating what is to happen next.

Ms. Hill proceeds to read her classroom rules, expanding on each one in turn. After she has gone over the entire list, she asks one student to read a rule and another student to explain why it is important. She then asks each student to write down the rules and to propose one additional rule for the class. She then collects the papers and proceeds with the English lesson she has prepared.

The next day, Ms. Hill hands out the list of rules, which now includes her synthesis of the additional rules the students have proposed. She goes over the rules again for reinforcement. She thanks the class for their input and praises them for their efforts.

Analysis of Ms. Hill's Class

This glimpse into Ms. Hill's classroom illustrates an effective approach to introducing students to her discipline plan. She had thoughtfully prepared her rules, as well as a seating chart, in advance. She

started her first day of class by pleasantly greeting her students. She assigned seats according to her plan and ignored the complaints of a few who wanted to sit next to friends. But she used good psychology by telling them that it is important to her to learn each name and that is why she seated them alphabetically. This strategy makes the student feel valued.

To impress on students that her classroom rules are important, she asked one student to read a rule and another to give its rationale. To get their input, she asked each student to propose an additional rule that would contribute to an orderly classroom. This made them feel like they were participants in the plan. She showed she respects and values her students' opinions by incorporating their additional rules in the handout she prepared for the second day of class. It appears that Ms. Hill has made a good beginning and can look forward to an orderly and successful class.

Mr. Reed's Class

Mr. Reed is in the back of the room checking textbooks when his students file into class the first day of school. The bell rings and he yells from the back of the room: "O.K., let's get into our seats. Didn't you hear the bell? Take any seat your want." The students scramble to sit near their friends. He then pulls out the class roster and proceeds to take roll. He hardly raises his eyes from the page as he reads the roster of names.

Mr. Reed continues, "I'm not going to give you boring rules and routines because you're old enough to know how to behave." "Anyway, no one follows them," he mutters under his breath. The front row hears him and giggles.

Mr. Reed then passes out the English textbooks and instructs them to turn to page five and read the short story silently. At this point, John gets up to sharpen his pencil and Mary hollers out that she didn't get a book. Mr. Reed reprimands Mary for failing to get her book when they were passed out and tells John to sit down and stop dis-

rupting the class. Both start arguing with him. While this is going on, two students arrive late and start toward the back of the class. Mr. Reed shouts, "Where is your tardy slip?" One of them snaps back, "What tardy slip? How are we supposed to get one?" Mr. Reed, now thoroughly exasperated, says, "Never mind, take a seat and be quiet."

Mr. Reed then proceeds with the lesson and starts asking questions about the reading assignment. He calls on a few students, but they cannot answer because they did not have time to read the short story because of all the class disruptions. Other students are whispering with each other. Mr. Reed realizes that he has lost control of the class. He shouts, "Rule number one is we don't. . . ." But it is too late. No one is listening.

Analysis of Mr. Reed's Class

Mr. Reed made quite a few wrong moves the first day of class that will likely cause him anxiety and problems throughout the year. He could have seated the students according to some format to help him learn their names, as well as to separate friends who cannot resist chitchatting. He could have established classroom rules and routines at the very beginning of class so that students had some guidelines for acceptable behavior. His mumbling that students would not follow the rules anyway made it clear to students that he did not regard rules as important. His general negativism no doubt contributed to students' unruliness. When the students started whispering during the reading assignment, he tried to bring them to order by yelling. He did not establish himself as the authority figure, nor did he lay the foundation for appropriate student behavior in his classroom. Obviously, the class did not take their teacher seriously.

If Mr. Reed is to be even moderately successful, he will need some quick help on effective classroom management and control, as well as some solid advice on planning and organization.

Mr. Bell's Class

Mr. Bell teaches fifth grade at Elm Elementary School. This is the second week of school and students already are used to the classroom rules and routines Mr. Bell presented to them the first couple days of school. They were given a copy of the classroom code to take home to their parents. The students consider the code reasonable because they helped to develop it.

When the students arrive back in Mr. Bell's room after their P.E. class, they are a little rowdy. Calling them to attention, Mr. Bell compliments them on their work to date with the World Cultures unit they are studying. He starts class by saying, "Let's continue with our unit on South American Indians." Suddenly he notices a minor incident at the back of the room where two boys are exchanging notes and snickering. Mr. Bell lifts his head slightly, stares at the boys, and shakes his head. The boys stop their snickering and return to order. Mr. Bell ignores the note passing and continues with the lesson. "Class, today I want to see how much you remember from your homework assignment yesterday when I asked you to read the section on South American Indians. I am going to give you a guide sheet on which you can write your answers."

As he passes out the guide sheets, he praises the students for the large, colorful outline map of South America they have made for the bulletin board, on which they will place important information as the unit progresses. The business-like atmosphere of the classroom is disrupted when Michael gets up to sharpen his pencil and knocks his lunchbox off his desk. Everyone laughs. This is the second time Michael has disturbed the class today. Mr. Bell shakes his head and motions to Michael to get back in his seat. He tells Michael he is giving him a penalty point because he broke rule #4 and refers him to rule #4 on the poster hanging on a side wall. While reprimanding Michael, Mr. Bell instructs the class to continue working on the guide sheets.

As Mr. Bell circulates around the classroom, he notices that Jennifer has not answered any of the questions on the guide sheet, so he asks her about this. She confesses that she had not done the homework reading assignment the day before. Mr. Bell says he will talk to her after class. Mr. Bell did not have any further disruptions, and the class continued to work in a productive fashion.

Analysis of Mr. Bell's Class

Mr. Bell demonstrated effective strategies for maintaining classroom discipline. At the beginning he made behavior expectations clear by presenting his classroom rules and routines (Canter, Goodlad, Kounin, Glasser). He also invited his students to suggest additional rules. He was generous with praise and verbal rewards (Canter, Goodlad, Kounin, Glasser).

When a minor disruption occurred, Mr. Bell stared at the offender and used body language as a mechanism for control (Canter, Goodlad, Glasser). He used Kounin's strategy of overlapping by keeping the class on task while reprimanding Michael. He also demonstrated withitness by knowing the personalities and behaviors of class members and reacting appropriately. When he noticed Jennifer was not working, he did not interrupt the class to reprimand her publicly but asked to see her after class to learn why she had not done her homework (Goodlad, Glasser).

Mr. Bell knows that being a little strict at the outset will work for him with this particular class. He already senses that he will have the respect of his students. This will probably turn out to be a good year for Mr. Bell.

Ms. Winter's Class

Ms. Winter is excited about her first position teaching Spanish at Pleasant Valley Middle School. Her student teaching experience had not gone well; but she blames that on her cooperating teacher, who

apparently was having problems with students before she got there. Ms. Winter is sure that she can relate to her students. After all, she is young and attractive and speaks Spanish fluently.

For the first day of school Ms. Winter has prepared a seating chart and has posted a rules chart on the wall. Her first-period class starts arriving at 8:10 a.m. Some take seats, but others stand around in groups and continue talking even after the bell rings. Ms. Winter calls the class to order, but several continue chatting in their groups. She takes a ruler and, rapping it on her desk, shouts, "This class will come to order." After they all sit down, she says apologetically, "I'm sorry to be so mean; but after all, I am the teacher. I'll let you sit anywhere you want today, but tomorrow I'll seat you according to the seating chart I have made." At that point, several students rush around changing seats in order to sit next to a friend. After waiting some time for everyone to get seated, Ms. Winter begins her lesson: "Today I want to begin by teaching you some common Spanish words; but before I do, maybe some of you know some Spanish words. Who can tell me a Spanish word they know?" Joe shouts out, "How about taco?" Everyone starts to laugh. Then Ellen says, "A boy I know called me a hot tamale." At that point, the class becomes hysterical. By this time Ms. Winter is furious and shouts: "You two are being ridiculous. You know very well what those words mean." At that point David interjects, "Well, what does it mean, Ms. Winter?" Meanwhile, John gets up to sharpen his pencil. Ms. Winter snaps at him: "Sit down, young man, you are not to sharpen your pencil while I'm talking. Look at the classroom rules listed on the chart." He shouts back, "How was I supposed to know?"

By this time Ms. Winter is losing control of the class. Several students start talking to each other in the back of the room. One boy is trying on his buddy's baseball cap, and a girl is putting on makeup. Ms. Winter screams, "Obviously, this class is not interested in Spanish, so let's just have a study hall. Take your textbook, read the first chapter, and do the exercises on page seven."

Analysis of Ms. Winter's Class

Ms. Winter's first class session was clearly off to a bad start. Her expectations were unrealistic. She thought her youth and good looks would help in managing her classroom, because she could relate to her students. She did little to anticipate potential problems. She did not seat them as planned. She lost face after shouting at them by apologizing for her outburst. She never did get to the classroom rules she had posted on the wall (Canter, Goodlad, Kounin, Glasser). She lost control when she argued with and insulted the students. She let the ripple effect of one person's laughter carry over to the rest of the class, resulting in chaos (Kounin).

Ms. Winter was not assertive when students shouted back at her; instead, she became defensive and abusive. She had not prepared herself for confrontations and had not practiced mentally what she would say or do when challenged (Canter, Goodlad, Kounin, Glasser). She did not remind students of consequences of misbehavior, nor did she separate disruptive students (Canter, Goodlad, Kounin, Glasser). She did not exhibit Kounin's strategies of withitness and overlapping when dealing with several problems at one time. And she lacked momentum or staying on task.

Probably the best thing Ms. Winter did was give up and call a study hall. The next best thing for her would be to start fresh tomorrow after getting some constructive advice on how to organize and manage a class.

Both the positive and negative scenarios presented here serve to guide teachers in preventing and managing discipline in the classroom. Being aware of potential problems and using proven strategies to handle these problems can mean the difference between a successful teaching experience and a chaotic classroom.

Conclusion

Discipline problems will occur in any classroom. Whether these problems get out of control depends on the teacher's skill in using preventive actions to set limits on student behavior and discipline strategies to follow through when students go beyond those limits. This fastback offers discipline strategies that teachers can learn to control student behavior in the classroom.

Following is a synthesis of discipline strategies that especially beginning teachers, but experienced teachers as well, can use to help maintain an orderly classroom environment.

1. Establish classroom behavior rules at the outset in order to maximize instruction and minimize discipline problems. Involve students in developing the rules so they have some sense of ownership of the rules.
2. Arrange student seating so as to avoid potential problems; for example, separate students who might be the source of disrupting actions. Also, students must be able to see the teacher; and the teacher must be able to see the students at all times in order to monitor instruction and behavior.
3. Praise works wonders. Reinforce positive student behavior frequently. Students must be complimented when they do good work and behave properly.
4. Body language and verbal cues can thwart problems. A nod of the head, a glare, and moving closer to the offender often

can solve minor problems. A reminder of the consequences for misbehavior also is effective.

5. Ignore minor incidents or handle them with body language. Many times students are testing their teacher.
6. Be assertive, but do not get angry when a student disrupts the class. Handle the offense in a calm manner, referring to the rules outlined in your discipline plan.
7. Maintain a place in your classroom for isolating misbehaving students. Students need a place to cool off and to remind them that they are misbehaving.
8. If misbehavior continues, call the parents. Explain the problem and ask for their support. If calling parents does not work, send the student to the principal, indicating the offense and why it cannot be tolerated.
9. Students who persist in being defiant may need help and support. Counseling may be necessary for chronic offenders.
10. If all avenues of disciplinary action have failed, school suspension may be your only recourse. Make sure you have anecdotal notes to support your request for suspension.

Having an orderly learning environment is the goal of all teachers. Achieving that goal will require learning and practicing the strategies addressed in this fastback. Above all, there must be consistency in carrying out the discipline plan. With experience and practice, many discipline problems can be prevented. But when they do occur, there are many effective strategies for handling them effectively.

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